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ABSTRACT

The guide details the policy of the Jefferson County (Alabama) Board of Education policy concerning international exchange of students (travel both to and from United States) in elementary and secondary grades. The first section specifies the standards by which the county will evaluate all international exchange agencies concerning structure, participant and host family screening, travel arrangements and health insurance, contractual responsibility, and compliance with applicable government regulations. Three categories of foreign student are then defined: elementary and middle school students; secondary school students whose work in the United States will not count toward graduation requirements; and secondary school students whose work will count toward graduation requirements in their native country. Educational policies for each group are discussed. Limitations of the county's responsibility, and the county's expectations of the sponsoring agency, are also specified. Guidelines for pre-travel orientation are offered, and "in loco parentis" policy is specified. (MSE)

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ED 394 275

JefCoEd

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR FOREIGN EXCHANGE AGENCIES

FIRST EDITION

E PLURIBUS UNUM; Out of many, one.

PRODUCED BY
DIVISION OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

WRITTEN AND COMPILED BY
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FOREIGN LANGUAGE CONSULTANT

· 1995

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA
U.S.A.

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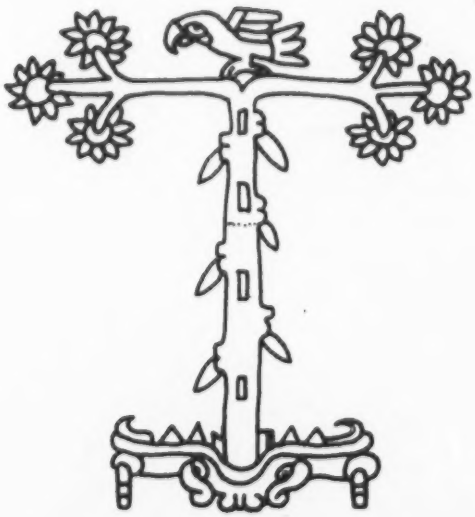


STANDARDS BY WHICH JEFCOED WILL EVALUATE ALL INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE AGENCIES

The primary purpose for all foreign exchange programs shall be clearly recognizable as being structured for and serving appropriate educational objectives. All promotional information shall scrupulously and accurately reflect the agency's capacities and spectrum of services. All organizational policies and communication procedures shall be explicitly defined.

The foreign exchange agency will be expected to carefully select and screen all participants by means of clearly established criteria. The agencies shall safeguard the students' interests at all times.

The agency shall also screen and select the host families with equal care along lines established by well-defined standards. The agency shall endeavor toward compatibility between the hosts and the students as much as culturally realistic.

JefCoEd will expect any international travel program to include an adequate health and accident insurance plan to cover serious illness, injury or death of the student. The policy is to cover the student from time of departure until time of return. The agency shall informed the host family, the participating student and his or her parents as to procedures for filing a claim. The source of the coverage is not pertinent. It may be made available by either the sponsoring agency, the participant's family or by any other means including family policies already in existence.

The exchange agency shall be fully capable and competent to manage all travel arrangements, visas, passports, etc. This shall include suitable orientations for participants, their parents and the host families.

All international exchange agencies shall be fully capable of discharging all contractual and financial obligations to all participants by virtue of protection through bonding, insurance and/or escrow accounts, etc. In short, safeguards shall be in place to assure that no participant is to suffer financial loss or be left stranded for reasons of mismanagement or bankruptcy. All sponsoring agencies, whether profit based or non-profit based, shall be prepared and willing to provide detailed written information concerning all physical and financial arrangements upon request.

The sponsoring agency shall be in adherence to all government regulations related to any activities under their auspices in both the sending and the receiving countries.

Category A

Jefferson County Public Schools define foreign exchange students by three categories.

Category A is elementary and/or middle school exchange students. These are extremely rare; however, when they do occur, the students are generally interested in credit for their work to be added to their records at home upon return.

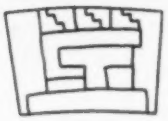
The student will need a valid transcript from his or her previous school. This document should be sent directly to us by mail from the previous school and not hand carried by the student. The student will be required to meet the same academic standards as his American peers with as much attention being given to his or her personal interest as the grade level curriculum and the State Course of Study standards will allow. Only the most sophisticated and mature student should be allowed to attempt such an adventure. Only in the most unusual circumstances would a student at these age levels be skilled enough in English to succeed unless he or she were from an English speaking country or English speaking home environment.

Category B

Category B is defined as those exchange students who come to us as post-graduates and/or whose work is not intended to count toward a formal graduation neither here nor in the home country. In these cases their academic achievement is of secondary importance to a positive cultural experience. Under these circumstances we will take wide latitudes in determining what subjects to assign for study. We will go with the interests of the student as much as possible, taking into consideration their probable level of English proficiency.

To facilitate our enrollment process we will need a transcript from the previous school, preferably mailed to us in advance. However, unlike category A and C, the category B student may hand carry his or her transcript and submit it upon arrival.

Although the student should be appropriately challenged, when an official graduation is not the goal, our concerns for official graduation standards do not go much beyond assigning a full school day. In general, unless the student is totally proficient in English, he or she will do best in hands-on classes such as keyboard and art. Math classes are often a good choice because of the universal nature of numbers. If the interest is there, another foreign language may be an excellent choice. If English is not their native language, classes that require a large volume of reading often prove to be overly



burdensome and are best avoided. Commonly we find that foreign exchange students like to take driver's education classes since in many cases an American driver's license can be exchanged for one at home upon their return.

Since the category B students are not locked to formal graduation standards, if they experience a problem or have overextended themselves academically, the privilege of a class change, although it must be kept within reasonable limits, is acceptable with much greater latitude than would normally be allowed.

Since these cultural experience seeking students generally come to us at age eighteen or nineteen, they are normally included in with all senior class activities. Although their goal does not include an official diploma, if participation in the graduation ceremonies is desired, they may be included. In lieu of a diploma they will receive an appropriate exit document which only recognizes their visit for cultural exchange purposes.

Category C

Category C is by far the most important in that strict procedures must be followed. These are the foreign exchange students whose work is to count toward graduation, either here or upon returning to their native country.

For a category C foreign exchange student, the requirements are basically the same as those for any American student transferring into our school system from a different district or state within the country. He or she will be admitted upon receipt of an official transcript directly from the preceding school and will be enrolled in accordance with Alabama State Law in the required grade courses and in the available elective courses which correspond in sequence and appropriateness as nearly as possible with those taken in the previous school. Subjects required by Alabama law on grade levels below their entrance level do not apply.

If the graduation is to take place after further study in the home country, class scheduling will be done with regard being given as much as possible to what will be recognized by the home school toward graduation. However, no two school systems operate exactly alike. These differences may be dramatic across international boundaries and expectations must remain realistic to the circumstances.

The category C exchange student may need to have the American transcript mailed back to his or her home school or college. The sponsoring agency should alert the student to this possibility and advise the student to bring the correct addresses for these mailings. It is much easier to anticipate these needs in advance than it is to work them out later through international correspondence, which often as not requires translators in the middle.

All category C exchange students who wish to graduate here must pass the Alabama High School Basic Skills Exit Exam in order to receive a high school diploma. This is Alabama state law for all students. The law will allow any low English proficiency student to defer taking the exam for up to two years, and if the exam or any part of it is failed, it may be repeated at a later date. This factor can be a formidable barrier for a student whose English is not good. It should be given full consideration before beginning the category C program since the foreign exchange student is generally locked to a limiting time table.

Loosely generalized, if a foreign exchange student comes to us from a non-English speaking part of the world and has less than five years of indepth study of English as a foreign language, in all probability he or she will experience at least some, if not considerable, academic difficulty. The exchange students should be made fully aware of this when the category C program is their goal.

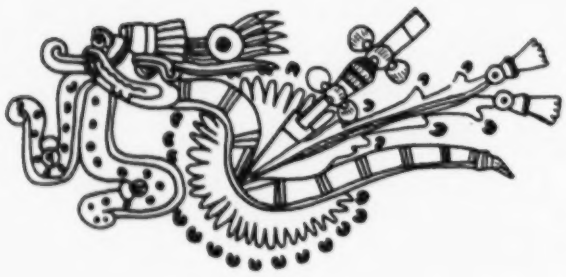
People who themselves have not learned a second language are often incredibly naive as to what it takes to do so and may not fully appreciate the foreign exchange student's situation. Generally, these students are brave and industrious individuals who accept the challenge, but even students who have had several years of successful study in English as a second language may find themselves overextended at first, and closing the gap may require more time than is available.

Although the U.S.A. is basically a monolingual society, let it not be overlooked that language is only one facet of this or any other society. The greater the cultural gap, the greater is the adjustment. No exchange student should be misled about the degree to which he or she can function comfortably and successfully in the American mainstream. Fortunately on the other hand, ours is a multi-based society which has evolved from many contributing cultures; therefore, for the most part the exchange student should find the U.S.A. far more tolerant and understanding than is often the case in many other parts of the world.

WHAT WE CANNOT DO FOR THE FOREIGN EXCHANGE STUDENT

Foreign exchange students have always been welcome in the Jefferson County Public Schools, and they have consistently proven to be a valuable asset for bringing to our students the reality of a world beyond our community; however, exchange students must be self-sustaining. The foreign exchange student is defined as a non-resident and as a visitor is not eligible for any of the extra services which go beyond the standard program. This excludes such services as the free or reduced cost lunch program, Chapter I for the educationally disadvantaged, and any special education services. Neither are they eligible for assistance from the low English proficiency and English as a second language program. However, if help with English is needed and wanted, this does not preclude any voluntary assistance which may be given by any interested parties on their own time. If tutoring in English is needed, there are outside agencies in the Birmingham area whose help may be sought. Names of representatives for these agencies and their phone numbers are readily available through the JefCoEd foreign language coordinator's office.

Neither can JefCoEd assume any of the responsibilities of the sponsoring agency. All of the arrangements for travel, for lodging and for any necessary travel documents, etc. are the exclusive domain of the sponsoring agency and/or their designated representatives here and abroad. Within these perimeters, once the foreign exchange student is here, we receive him or her as one of our own.



5

WHAT JEFCOED EXPECTS FROM THE SPONSORING AGENCY

Competent foreign exchange agencies are specialists whose experience and know-how enables them to select, counsel, advise and serve any exchange student wisely; therefore, it is expected that the sponsoring agency will leave nothing to chance and will be readily available and willing to assist in the event that any unforeseen problem should arise from day one onward to the day when the student is returned to his or her parents' care.

American medical facilities are among the best in the world, and Birmingham medical facilities are among the best of the American best. However, the sponsoring agency should be fully aware and should make the student and the parents aware that there is no socialized medicine in the U.S.A. much beyond basic emergency care. It is expected that any student sent to us be protected by a medical insurance policy which has a clearly written statement of protection across international borders.

Should the exchange student suffer from any chronic condition which requires prescription medication, the student should be instructed to hand carry medical records to that effect as well as the prescriptions needed to justify upon entry into the country any medication he or she may have chosen to bring. It also makes good travel sense to include as an optional part of the medical records a listing of any allergies to medications and the student's blood type; however, no special effort or testing in order to obtain this information in advance of travel is required or advised. Just include it if it is already known.

6

SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR PRE-TRAVEL ORIENTATION MEETINGS

Be specific for what and with whom each area of responsibility lies; with the agency, the student, the parents, the home or visited school, etc.

A. Passport regulations and requirements
   1. Visas, tourist cards, proof of citizenship
   2. Lead time for acquiring the above

B. Home country and U.S. custom regulations and requirements
   1. Proof of purchase in home country of valuable items such as cameras, jewelry, etc. which otherwise might be subject to duty upon re-entry
   2. Duty requirements on items purchased abroad

C. Health regulations, requirements and advice
   1. International certificate of vaccinations (where required)
   2. Food and water guidelines (what to expect while in the U.S. and while in route)
   3. Medical emergencies (what to do)

D. American law
   1. Explain traffic and pedestrian rules
   2. Make aware of drug and alcohol laws (be emphatic)
   3. Alert to any laws or rules which may be contrary to home country standards
   4. Establish awareness that the law of the land one is in takes precedence over the law of the land one is from.
   5. Explain In loco Parentis (see page 8.)

E. Cultural and environmental differences
   1. Local climate
      a. Packing recommendations
      b. Luggage weight requirement (if applicable)
   2. Electrical system differences
   3. Food and beverage differences and customs involved
   4. Time differences and any possible differences in attitudes toward time from a cultural standpoint

F. Money matters
   1. Computation of exchange
   2. Recommendations for spending money
   3. Tipping
   4. Sales taxes
   5. All costs that the student will encounter through the sponsoring agency (there should be no hidden agenda and no possible variable to which the student and parents have not been alerted in advance)

IN LOCO PARENTIS

On occasion an adult decision may need to be made as to what is in the best interest of the student under the given circumstances. Thus, in advance of travel the sponsoring agency shall make clear to the exchange student and his or her parents that the host family by virtue of becoming the host family has also assumed the responsibility of parents during the exchange student's stay in their home. Also, the American school will assume parental responsibilities during those hours at school until such time when the student is returned to the responsibility of the host family parents. This encompasses all school time, including any field trips and/or any other extra curricular activities.

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